

EDITORIAL.

Those who are engaged in investigation cannot but regret the increasing tendency to the establishment by educational institutions of independent publications which are to contain the results of investigations conducted at the institution or by members of its staff. It is getting to be the fashion now for all the larger colleges and universities to undertake the issue of either occasional "bulletins," or "contributions," or "studies." The agricultural experiment stations have the issue of at least four bulletins in the course of the year forced upon them by an absurd law; but these newer publications are not stimulated by any thing except the desire of the institution to advertise itself. As soon as a college comes to have graduate students, and a faculty with the leisure and ability for original work, it feels that it must follow the example of other colleges, in order to let it be known that such work is in progress. There is no plea whatever that there is any necessity for the establishment of such publications except self-aggrandizement. It is not that worthy papers could not otherwise see the light; it is not that the regular journals and transactions of learned societies are unable or unwilling to care for the flood of manuscripts which might otherwise be poured upon them. Not that; it is solicitude on the part of the University of B—— lest the University of A—— should become greater in reputation, or should attract more students.

To one who is looking up the literature of any particular subject this multiplicity of irregular journals and bulletins and contributions and proceedings is simply maddening. In Germany this evil has become so great that almost every department of learning is compelled to have its *Jahresbericht* and *Centralblatt*, which have not only attempted to compass German but also all literature in their special fields. But the task is becoming herculean, and sooner or later subdivision either of territory or topic must be made. We are coming to a time, and that rapidly, when such indexes to American literature will be indispensable. Every new and especially every occasional publication adds to the difficulty of collecting or keeping informed of botanical literature. It was therefore with especial pleasure that we welcomed the beginnings of such indexing in the publications of the botanical division and the division of vegetable pathology at Washington.

The objection to the multiplication of publications is the stronger when it is seen that the benefit of advertising can be secured without the evil complained of. The plan long pursued by Drs. Gray and Watson of the Harvard Botanic Garden, and adopted by the Crypto-

gamic Laboratory of the same university, and by the Herbarium of Columbia College is warmly to be commended. The series of papers emanating from these places bears a uniform title and each paper its serial number and sub-title, of which the first article in this issue is an example. By this plan any institution which desires advertising can secure it and at the same time utilize the ordinary channels for obtaining publicity for its investigations.

Or the plan adopted by the Johns-Hopkins University in the publications of its "circulars," and the similar one lately put into operation by the University of Minnesota in its "Quarterly Bulletin" are even more to be commended. In these there appear abstracts of any papers published by students or members of the faculty, with references to the place of publication. They also give opportunity for the inclusion of accounts of university organization and work, and many items of interest to alumni and educators. They thus serve admirably to show what the institutions are doing, and as advertising media could not be improved; while at the same time, instead of adding to the scattered publications which must be kept track of, they actually help to direct the student to the literature he seeks.

By all means let the botanists of our larger institutions endeavor to prevent so far as possible the troublesome scattering of botanical papers.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

* Western Grasses.

The "Grasses of the Southwest", lately completed, put into the hands of agrostologists 100 plates illustrating the chief species of the arid regions of the south western United States. It is quickly followed by part 1 of the "Grasses of the Pacific Slope",¹ in which fifty of the larger and economically important species are figured. The second part is expected to follow soon and when completed this will be the second volume of the "Illustrations of North American Grasses." Most of the species figured have not been illustrated before. The plates of this part are a decided improvement upon those of the second part of the first volume, even as these were better than the first. They are

¹VASEY, GEORGE—Grasses of the Pacific Slope, including Alaska and the adjacent islands. Plates and descriptions of the grasses of California, Oregon, Washington and the northwestern coast including Alaska. Bulletin 13, Div. of Bot., Dep't of Agric. Issued Oct. 20, 1892. Imp. 8° pl. 50. Washington. Gov't Printing Office.